THE

DIVINE ORDER OF DEGREES

IN MAN,

EXEMPLIFIED IN THE ORDER OF THE

FOUR GOSPELS.

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Mrs M. B. Norton.

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PREFACE.

THIS little volume includes the introductory papers given to classes which were organized during the past winter for the purpose of studying the Gospels according to the Law of Degrees.

If sufficient interest in this study should be excited in others by these preliminary pages, a larger volume will be brought out, in which all the subjects treated of by the Four Evangelists will be presented and explained according to the four illustrations given at the close of this work.

HIGHLANDS, MASS., May 21, 1877.

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THE DIVINE ORDER OF THE FOUR GOSPELS.

"TRUTH SHALL SPRING OUT OF THE EARTH; AND RIGHTEOUSNESS SHALL LOOK DOWN FROM HEAVEN." — Psalm lxxxv.

IT can be clearly seen that this "earth" and this "heaven" are not of the material world, for "truth" and "righteousness" are spiritual qualities, and thus the earth and the heaven which are here alluded to in connection with these spiritual qualities must be of a spiritual world. And where is this spiritual world, from the earth of which truth springs out, and from the heaven of which righteousness looks down? It must be a living reality, because truth and righteousness are living qualities. But where in all the region of the Divine and of the human does this spiritual system exist? If it is of spirit, it cannot be of space. Where is this kingdom, ruled by spiritual and not by natural laws? The Lord Himself has answered: "The Kingdom of God [which is heaven] is

within you," and he has also said, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit *the earth*." Do the meek really inherit the material earth? And yet the Lord has said it, and His words are truths of eternal life.

It must be that the heaven which "is within you," and the earth which the meek "shall inherit," form the two grand degrees of a spiritual world within man, as the material heaven and the material earth form the two grand divisions of the material world without him. This heaven within him must be the higher nature of man, and this earth must be the lower nature, for the very words establish this spiritual order. And this higher nature called "heavenly" must be the degree of life which is to be filled with heavenly affections and heavenly thoughts; and this lower nature, called "earthly," must be the region occupied by earthly affections and earthly thoughts. And if this higher nature is of a heavenly quality as to affection and thought, then there must be therein a Will principle and an Understanding principle, into which the heavenly affections and the heavenly thoughts can be received when given from the Lord, and accepted by the heavenly man. And if the lower nature is of an earthly quality

as to affection and thought, then there must be a Will principle in the earthly degree in which these affections can dwell, and an Understanding principle into which these thoughts can be received.

Perhaps this spiritual order can be made a little plainer by presenting it in form, thus: —

Heaven; or, The Will	Internal Man. Understanding.
Earth; or, The Understanding	External Man. Will.

And this is the whole man; he that is commanded to love the Lord his God with all the

Heart,	Soul,
Mind, and	Strength,

that is, with his whole nature, internal and external, — with the will and understanding of the heavenly degree, and with the understanding and will of the earthly degree. Do you ask, "Why is the order reversed as to the will and understanding of the earthly degree?" The answer to

this is. Because the will of the heavenly man is open immediately to the Lord of Life and Light above the heavens, and in this heavenly degree the Lord is loved above all earthly things. But in the earthly man the will is open more immediately to the world without, for while he lives upon the earth he is most powerfully affected, as to his love of self and of the world, by immediate contact with people and things "of the earth, earthy."

The love of the Lord in man and the love of the world in man are opposites, but they can harmonize when the internal heavenly man gains the control of his lower nature, and the external earthly man submits, as a servant to his Lord. But to make this reversion of the will and of the understanding still more clear, we can see that a new-born child is more affected by love towards his parents and companions than his understanding is affected by conclusions as to their qualities. As he develops, however, into independent thought, with the increase of years, the reasoning powers are brought to bear upon the affections of the will to modify their impulsive quality. Thus it is that the mother often grieves in secret over the apparent loss of that affection which was so spontaneously given when she was all in all to her infant child.

But this growing independence of reason and thought is really of progress and growth; it is the opening of another degree in the order of spiritual life.

And it is an interesting illustration of this spiritual law, even in the lower nature of man, to find in Matthew that the mother comes with her sons to Jesus, "desiring a certain thing of him" for them, while she is not mentioned in Mark, when the sons "come unto Him, saying," etc.

UNDERSTANDING.	EXTERNAL WILL.
MARK X.	MATTHEW XX.
35 ¶ And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.	20 ¶ Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping *him*, and desiring a certain thing of him.
36 And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you?	21 And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.
37 They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory.	

This, certainly, could not have been by chance.

After the progress from the blind affection of the child to the reasoning independence of the youth, there is, according to progressive order,

another and still greater change, which is of being "born again," or a beginning of heavenly life. In this heavenly kingdom the affections and thoughts are not to be of self and of the world, but of the love of the Lord and of faith in Him. But does this love of the Lord as a father fill at once this new-born soul, as the love of the earthly parents filled immediately the heart of the infant child on the lower plane of life?

It might have been so in the garden days of the world, when man lived in the Paradise of God; but now we reach the heights of heaven by a different way, and the child of God must now be taught of Him, before he can love the Father. On this heavenly plane of progress, then, the understanding first receives the truth, which is afterward confirmed by love. This love is then the intelligent love of the heavenly man.

Thus the gradual development of the nature of man, as we have endeavored to show, is from the external will to the internal will, through the exterior understanding, and through the interior understanding.

When this ascending order of *truth*, which "springs from the earth," is finished, we begin to realize the descending order of *righteousness*,

which "looks down from heaven." It is in John alone, the Inmost Degree of the Gospels, that the Lord declares upon the cross that "it is finished"; and it is in John alone that He declares Himself to be the "living bread that came down from heaven." Thus in John we find the end of the order of truth, and the beginning of the order of righteousness, or "living bread."

If we desire to see the Angel of Truth ascending from the degree of Matthew to the degree of John, — "Behold a ladder set upon the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it." *Genesis* xxviii, 12, — let us cultivate a child-like spirit, so that the descending angels of good, or "righteousness" (always descending, although we are unconscious of their nearness until we *learn* to love them), may be received as the marriage partners of our accepted truths. If we set our "water-pots of stone after the manner of the purifying of the Jews," we shall find at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (only mentioned in John) that we are prepared for the manifestation of "glory" in the change from external truth, or water, to the warming wine of heavenly faith.

The Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom pro-

ceed from the Lord as one; but each heavenly man and each earthly man receives this oneness according to his individual affection and thought. Thence proceeds the diversity of the good and of the true which forms the different churches on the earth, and causes each man to be a church. Some are in the "likeness" of the Divine, and some are in His "image," according as the will receives internal good, or according as the understanding receives internal truth; and some are on the natural plane alone, and receive appearances of truth from the letter of the Word, in which all attributes of the man himself are seen, as applied to God, and from the sense of which he cannot rise until he elevates *himself* into the light of heaven.

As there have been four ages in the spiritual history of man, — the gold, the silver, the brass, and the iron, — so has each individual man the faculty of completing these four ages within himself. The four degrees of the will and of the understanding, as given above, are in perfect correspondence with the four great religious eras of the world, because these very eras were the results of changes in man's spiritual states, from the golden times of love to the Lord and of the neigh-

bor to the forgetfulness of them in the love of self and of the world.

In the returning order, which, since the time of Christ, makes it possible for the four degrees to be opened up, and filled again with all the qualities of the will and of the understanding, which make the true heavenly and the true earthly man, we have the teachings of the gospel in a fourfold form. For they were written in the order of the man who was to be taught, — the Gospels of Matthew and Mark to teach how the earthly man can be educated for the reception of the good and the true of his degree, and the Gospels of Luke and John to teach how the heavenly man should rule the earthly in the fear of the Lord.

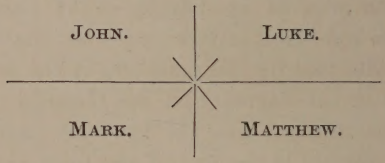
They open up in the progressive order of the reforming and regenerating soul. First, the degree of reformation in the earthly man, or Matthew and Mark; and then, the degree of regeneration in the heavenly man, or Luke and John.

The whole man, standing between the influences of the heavens above and the world without, in freedom to accept the one and reject the other, or to reject the one and accept the other.

The loving Father, sending his Son, or Truth, from Himself, to show how beautiful upon the

mountains are the feet of Him who bringeth the good tidings of the gospels to aid us in the choice of heaven, and in the taking up of the cross.

The cross which we are to take up in following our Lord is the gradual purification from self of all the four degrees in man. His own work is given in the Four Evangelists; and so He has left this record for us, that we may be regenerated, as He was glorified.



This is the cross of Christ, with all its states of despair and triumph; and it is in the form of a man as to all the degrees of the will and of the understanding, because it is in these degrees that we despair and triumph in following the Lord "in the regeneration."

And this is no new cross, because we find it in the very constitution of man. As it must have been "in the beginning," when "God created the heaven and the earth," so it must be forever. Let us proceed to see if this theory of the spiritual

constitution of man does not explain the wonderful relics we find belonging to past ages in singular forms of art and fable, which give us evidence of a universal belief in the sacredness of that which is fourfold.

We have said that this cross is probably as old as man, because it treats of his spiritual nature from the Divine, and the following quotations from a work by Brinton upon "The Myths of the New World" most wonderfully coincide with such an impression. For here we find the ancient Indian tribes holding the number *four* as sacred in their religious observances, and forming from it the *symbol of the cross.*

"The reason of the adoption of the number four must take its rise from some essential relation of man to nature, everywhere prominent, everywhere the same. It is found in the *adoration of the four cardinal points.*

"The assumption of precisely four cardinal points is not of chance; it is recognized in every language; it is rendered essential by the anatomical structure of the body; it is derived from the immutable laws of the universe.

"These were the spirits who made and governed the earth, and under whatsoever difference of

guise the uncultivated fancy portrayed them, they were the leading figures in the tales and ceremonies of nearly every tribe of the red race.

"In the Maya language, the quarters of the indiction (the picture writings of the days of the week, placed respectively north, south, east, and west) still bear the name of the cardinal points, hinting the reason of their adoption. This cannot be fortuitous. Again, the division of the year into four seasons, obtained in very early times among several nations, was supposed to be produced by the unending struggles and varying fortunes of the four aerial giants who rule the winds.

"Let it be remembered how closely the motions of the air are associated in thought and language with the operations of the soul and the idea of God."

The spirit or life is often compared to the wind, as in John: "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

"Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind." — *Psalm* xlviii, 7. *Ezekiel:* "Come, O Spirits, from the four winds, and breathe into the slain, that they may live." *Apocalypse:* "The

angel standing upon the four corners of the earth holding back the four winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow upon the earth." *Matthew:* "And they shall gather together the elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." Many other passages might be adduced to prove "how closely the motions of the air are associated in thought and language" in the Word of God "with the operations of the soul and the idea of God." One singular passage in Hosea will be added to show that some spiritual significance must be attached to the subject of the winds: "Ephraim feedeth on the wind, and followeth the east wind." And one more in Amos: "I will cause the sun to set in the *south*, and I will darken the earth in the day of light." These are according to the degrees in man thus:

East.	South.
North.	West.

Again, from Brinton: "The Algonkins and Dakotas traced their lives back to four ancestors, personages concerned in various ways with the first things of time, not rightly distinguished as

men or gods, but very positively identified with the four winds.

"It is a shade more complex when we come to the Creeks. They told of four men who came from the four corners of the earth, who brought them the sacred fire, and pointed out the seven sacred plants.

"We can trace the sacredness of the number four in other and unlooked-for developments. By adding together the first four members of its arithmetical series (4+8+12+16), it gives the number forty. This was taken as a limit to the sacred dances of some Indian tribes, and by others as the highest number of chants to be employed in exorcising diseases. Consequently it came to be fixed as a limit in exercises of preparation or purification."

This is in singular harmony with the number forty in the Word. The Lord was forty days in the desert; the flood lasted forty days; the Israelites were in the wilderness forty years, etc.

Again from Brinton: "But a more striking parallelism awaits us. The symbol that beyond all others has fascinated the human mind, *The Cross*, finds here its source and meaning. Scholars have pointed out its sacredness in many natural religions, or offered scores of conflicting interpreta-

tions. It is but another symbol of the four cardinal points, the four winds of heaven.

"In the Mexican tongue it bore the significant and worthy name, 'Tree of our Life,' or 'Tree of our Flesh.' In ancient Egyptian writings it is interpreted 'Life.'"

The universal belief in the sacredness of number is an instinctive faith in an immortal truth. The laws of chemical combination, of the various laws of motion, of all organic growth, show that simple numerical relations govern all the properties and are inherent in the very constitution of matter. In view of such facts is it presumptuous to predict that experiment itself will prove the truth of Kepler's beautiful saying, "The universe is a harmonious whole, the soul of which is God; numbers, figures, the stars, all nature indeed, are in unison with the mysteries of religion"?

This is a truth which already delights the devout student seeking for light in "the mysteries of religion"; and especially those who are seeking for the significance of the fourfold in the order of the cross.

In the *Art Journal* of December, 1875, we find some very interesting particulars of the Fylfot cross (or four-footed), from which the following is

an extract: "The Fylfot cross, or Thor's hammer, or Gammadion, 'the dissembled cross under the discipline of the secret,' * is one of the most ancient and most interesting of the whole series of crosses.

"In Northern mythology it is known as the hammer of Thor, the Scandinavian god or Thunderer, and is called Thor's hammer or the thunderbolt.

"This hammer was of gold, and with it Thor destroyed his enemies. This had the peculiar property that, wherever thrown, it never failed to strike the object at which it was aimed, and it always returned back to Thor's hand. It is found in very ancient specimens of Chinese porcelain and appears on Scandinavian, Danish, and Gaulic coins, as well as those of Syracuse, Corinth, and Chalcedon. It appears on Etruscan, Roman, and other pottery, on paintings in the catacombs of Rome and on Roman sculptures. The thunderbolt of Jove has probably the same meaning and bears a marked resemblance to the Fylfot in some of its details."

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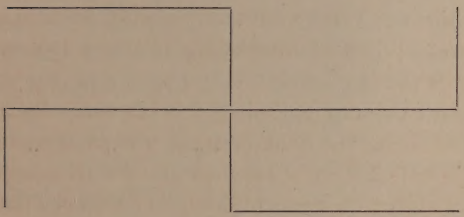
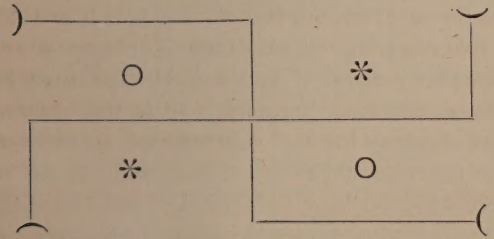
* Ezekiel xxxvii, 11. "The sons of Arvad and thine army upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadians were in thy towers, they hanged their shields upon the walls round about; these have perfected thy beauty." It is singular to observe the connection between the cross "of the secret" and these Gammadians who signify the knowledges of interior truth which are comparatively secret.

THE HAMMER OF THOR.

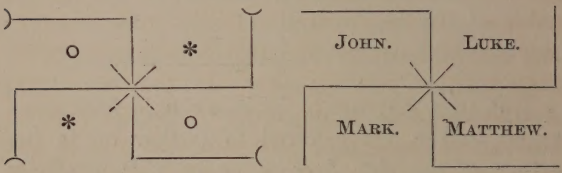


This cross appears to be in a simple form compared to the one referred to farther on in the article of the *Art Journal* as of a "peculiarly mystic appearance." Each of its limbs is terminated with a crescent, while in the four quarters are respectively two stars and two circles, thus:



And here we have a most astonishing proof of a spiritual significance in this form of the cross

when compared with the order of degrees that we have referred to as the form of the gospels. In placing them side by side, we shall be deeply impressed by a view of the presence of the Divine from "the beginning" with the children of men, to teach them of Himself.



We have said that Matthew and John are the two will principles in which external and internal love dwells; and that Mark and Luke are the exterior and interior understandings into which truth is received. And we see in this cross "of a peculiarly mystical appearance" that the signs most wonderfully harmonize with this spiritual order of man's internal and external nature, both as to the wills and as to the understandings.

For affection is of the "circle," and knowledge of truth is represented by stars. This could be proved by many illustrations from the Word and from the common acceptation of this law in

every-day life. But as this little work is only given to hint at truths that may be delightfully studied by each individual mind, it is only necessary to give one common illustration: the circle of the ring is always given in betrothal and marriage as a token of affection, and this universal custom is of great significance in its connection with spiritual law. In the illustration of the cross from the *Art Journal*, we see the two circles crossing in their relative positions, and also the two stars. And in the cross of the order of the Gospels we also see the crossing of the two wills and of the two understandings. Thus, as it was in the beginning, so it must always be. If we find an image of this order in the relics of past ages, in the legends of the North and of the South, of the East and of the West, it must be the same, only more interiorly and gloriously revealed in the cross of Christ, — the four degrees of the Holy Evangelists.

Let us now proceed to illustrate the subject of a universal law concerning the teaching of a Divine Father by quoting the testimony of such a law, lately found in the ruins of Troy. The legend of the child Agni is in wonderful harmony with gospel history, and is full of spiritual significance in every detail.

From "Troy and its Remains," by Schliemann:—

"I now perceive that these crosses upon the Trojan *terra-cottas* are of the highest importance to archæology. I therefore consider it necessary to enter more fully into the subject, all the more so as I am now able to prove that both the crosses * which I find in Emile Burnouf's Sanscrit Lexicon, under the name of 'suastika,' were already regarded, thousands of years before Christ, as religious symbols of the very greatest importance among the early progenitors of the Aryan race in Bactria and in the valleys of the Oxus, at a time when Germans, Indians, Pelasgians, Celts, Persians, Slavonians, and Iranians still formed one nation and spoke one language, for I recognize, at the first glance, the 'suastika' upon one of those three pot-bottoms, which were discovered on Bishop's Island, near Königsswolde, on the right bank of the Oder, and have given rise to very many learned discussions, while no one recognized the work as that exceedingly significant religious symbol of our remote ancestors;

* One of these crosses being in the same form as the hammer of Thor, and the other a solid cross with an appearance of the sun in the centre.

I find a whole row of these 'suastikas' all round the famous pulpit of Saint Ambrose, in Milan; I find it occurring a thousand times in the catacombs of Rome; I find it in three rows, and thus repeated sixty times, upon an ancient Celtic funereal urn discovered in Shropham, in the county of Norfolk, and now in the British Museum; I find it also upon several Corinthian vases in my own collection, as well as upon two very ancient Attic vases in the possession of Professor Kusopulus, at Athens, which are assigned to a date as early, at least, as 1,000 years before Christ. I likewise find it upon several ancient coins of Leucas, and in the large mosaic in the royal palace garden in Athens. An English clergyman, the Rev. W. Brown Keer, who visited me here, assures me that he has seen the cross innumerable times in the most ancient Hindoo temples, and especially in those of Gaïna. I find in the *Ramayana* that the ships of King Rama, in which he carried his troops across the Ganges on his expedition of conquest to India and Ceylon, bore the cross on their prows."

"Emile Burnouf, in his excellent work, *La Science des Religions*, just published, says, 'The cross represents the two pieces of wood which were

laid crosswise upon one another before the sacrificial altars, in order to produce the holy fire (*Agni*), and whose ends were bent round at right angles and fastened by means of four nails, so that this wooden scaffolding might not be moved. At the point where the two pieces of wood were joined, there was a small hole, in which a third piece of wood in the form of a lance (called *Pramantha*) was rotated by means of a cord made of cow's hair and hemp, till the fire was generated by friction. The father of the holy fire (*Agni*) is Twostri, *i. e.* the divine carpenter, who made the cross and the Pramantha, by the friction of which the divine child was produced. The Pramantha was afterwards transformed by the Greeks into Prometheus, who, they imagined, stole fire from heaven, so as to instil into earth-born man the bright spark of the soul.

"'The mother of the holy fire is the divine Mâjâ, who represents the productive force in the form of of a woman; every divine being has his Mâjâ. Scarcely has the weak spark escaped from its mother's lap — that is, from the cross which is likewise called mother, and is the place where the divine Mâjâ principally dwells — when it (*Agni*) receives the name of child. In the Rigvêda we

find hymns of heavenly beauty in praise of this new-born, weak, divine creature. The little child is laid upon straw; beside it is the mystic cow, that is, the milk and butter destined as the offspring; before it is the holy priest of the divine Vâju, who waves the small Oriental fan in the form of a flag, so as to kindle life in the little child, which is close upon expiring. Then the little child is placed upon the altar, where, through the holy *sôma* (the juice of the Tree of Life), poured over it, and through the purified butter, it receives a mysterious power, surpassing all comprehension of the worshippers.

"'The child's glory shines upon all around it. Angels (*dêvâs*) and men shout for joy, sing hymns in its praise, and throw themselves upon their faces before it. On its left is the rising sun, on its right the full moon on the horizon; and both appear to grow pale in the glory of the new-born god (*Agni*), and to worship him.

"'But how did the transfiguration of *Agni* take place? At the moment when one priest laid the young god upon the altar, another poured the holy draught, the spiritual *sôma*, upon its head, and then immediately anointed it by spreading over it the butter of the holy sacrifice. By being

thus anointed *Agni* receives the name of the anointed (*Akta*). He has, however, grown enormously through the combustible substances; rich in glory, he sends forth his blazing flames; he shines in a cloud of smoke, which rises to heaven like a pillar; and his light unites with the light of the heavenly orbs. The god, *Agni*, in his splendor and glory, reveals to man the secret things; he teaches the doctors; he is the master of the masters; and receives the name of *Jâtavêdas*, that is, he in whom wisdom is inborn.'

"Upon writing to M. E. Burnouf to inquire about the other symbol, — the cross with the appearance of a sun in the centre, — which occurs hundreds of times upon the Trojan *terra-cottas*, he replied that he knows with certainty from the ancient scholiasts on the Rigvêda, from comparative philology, and from the *monuments figurés*, that *suastikas* in this form also were employed in the very remotest times for producing the holy fire."

There is found in Isaiah vii, 14, 15, 22, the following, which is in singular harmony with the reference to "butter" in the above legend: "A virgin shall conceive and bear a son; butter and honey shall he eat that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good. It shall come to pass

for the abundance of milk that they shall give that they shall eat butter."

The small Oriental fan alluded to as being waved so as to kindle life in the little child must have the same significance as the sheaf of the Jewish ritual, which was shaken on the Sabbath to denote the vivification of truths from good, and this from the Lord who is the all of life. The child, or the new born of truth, was kept alive by good.

There appear to be many minds interested in the subject of the cross, and some in the order of the gospels from a spiritual view; and here let me quote from a volume by Jukes upon the "Differences of the Four Gospels," a collection of lectures delivered in England and lately republished here. The lecturer says, "I would yet add a word as to the order of the gospels, for I am well assured that the order of Scripture, as we now have it, involves deep teaching. Here, as well as in all things, God has had a hand; and, indeed, it needs no special light to see that in the four gospels the character of the revelation increases in depth, or at least changes its form as we proceed. 'The first thousand cubits the waters were to the ankles; the second thousand cubits the waters were to the knees; the third thousand cubits the

waters were to the loins; afterwards, it was waters to swim in, — a river which could not be passed over.' — *Ezekiel* xlvii, 3, 4, 5.

"A harmony of the gospels, though it is interesting and has its use, leads us from the special purpose for which the gospels were written as they are. For by arranging everything chronologically many passages lose the force which they possess as portions of a distinct series. The spirit of God, here in historic, there in moral order, has put this or that fact touching the Son before me. The facts are precious, get them as I may, but doubly precious if I am able to apprehend the purpose of God in presenting them in this or that relation. Then each scene in its omissions, in its forms, in its position in the series, is part of a divine mystery, which, though hid from the wise and prudent of the world, is yet often revealed to babes."

Is this not better than the effort to explain discrepancies from the ingenuity of a one-sided view, — a determination to explain at any cost of probability, as in the following explanation of a divine teaching in the Gospel of Matthew? "The reason why Matthew did not see the *two* angels spoken of in John at the resurrection of our Lord was

probably because the other angel was behind the sepulchre, and so Matthew could not see him." This is the substance of a conclusion (from a "Harmony of the Gospels") concerning a wonderful fact, of which Matthew gives such a different account from John, and from all the other gospels. It is quite time that some better theory should be given than this, which would rather confirm a sceptic in his doubt of being able to harmonize the discrepancies than convince him of the authenticity of the gospels from such a point of view. As another proof of interest in the order of the gospels, we quote from a new work by Dr. Gregory, of the University of Wooster, Ohio: —

"The one Gospel of Jesus Christ appears in the sacred Scriptures in four forms, — a first, according to Matthew; a second, according to Mark; a third, according to Luke; and a fourth, according to John. Why not in three, or five, or twenty forms? or why not, in accordance with a prevailing desire of the present age, in only one form?

"Since the *fact* of four gospels cannot be escaped, wherein and why do they differ? Do the order, harmony, and design, which are found everywhere in God's world, appear also in that other work by God, His Word? In particular, did the infinite Reason

preside in the production of the gospels, so that we may confidently look for a divine plan in each of them considered by itself, and a like plan in the whole of them taken together? In all ages thoughtful men, and especially the great souls of the Church, have shrunk from looking upon the gospels as aimless and disjointed productions, mere medleys of fact and truth. But in seeking to reach the order and unity which their natures craved, they have tried different and often irrational methods.

"The harmonists have done good and worthy work so far as they have assisted to explain the apparent inconsistencies of the gospels, and to make the true relations of the various portions better understood. So far, however, as they have undertaken to construct one continuous and complete narrative of the career of Jesus of Nazareth, they have attempted an impossible task. There are no sufficient data upon which to base a just conclusion concerning the precise time when many of the events recorded in the gospels occurred. It will appear subsequently in this discussion that it was no part of the aim of the evangelists to give a complete account of the life of Jesus, strictly arranged in the order of time. Their chronology

is clear and distinct, at the most, only in the opening and concluding chapters. But even if the exact time of each event could be ascertained, it would still be impossible to combine the four gospels in one consistent whole.

"The allegorists. — Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, in the second century, began with the vision of the four cherubim, in the first chapter of Ezekiel. That vision, in its symbolical meaning, he applied to the distinctive peculiarities of the gospels. 'As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side; and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.' The man, according to Irenæus, symbolizes Matthew's gospel; the lion, Mark's; the ox, Luke's; the eagle, John's. The later fathers adopted and developed the idea of Irenæus. At the end of two centuries, Jerome completed the development, and proposed that special arrangement and application of the symbols which the Latin Church adopted, and which art has perpetuated.

"The great Augustine was dissatisfied with the explanation of Irenæus. So were some even before his day, and more after it. He preferred the order in John's vision of the Four Living Creatures, as

found in Revelation iv, 7: 'And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast was like a calf, and the third beast was like a flying eagle.' Matthew's gospel, according to this view, is symbolized by the *lion*, because he sets forth Christ as the lion of the tribe of Judah; Mark's by the *calf* or *ox*, because he exhibits Christ as the servant in a life of patient, humble service; Luke's by the *man*, because he holds forth Christ as the perfection of humanity; John's by the *eagle*, because of his heavenward gaze and flight in unfolding the mysteries of Christ's deity.

"Among the latest adaptations is that of Lange in his 'Life of Jesus,' an adaptation approved by Stier. The ox, the lion, the man, the eagle, is Lange's order.

"It is not too much to say that the attempts to put a plan into the gospels, in this arbitrary way, have failed no less utterly than the attempts of the harmonists to put the material of the gospels into a new form better than the divine.

"Though man often works irrationally and without plan, God never does. In the introduction of Christianity into the world there was a divine plan whose working out reached through all the ages until the complete embodiment of the one

gospel in the four forms in which it appears in the Bible. Into that plan the ancient world, Jewish and Pagan, consciously or unconsciously entered.

"There are four gospels, because Jesus was to be commended to four races or classes of men, or to four phases of human thought, — the Jewish, Roman, Greek, and Christian. Had not these exhausted the classes to be reached, there would doubtless have been more gospels; and had there not been so many classes, with essential differences in temperament and modes of thought, there would doubtless have been less.

"The very striking differences seen in the three missionary gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and between these three and the Christian gospel, John, are fully explained. While the differences of the three synoptics originated in the common facts of the character and career of Christ, which all the apostles went forth to preach, the differences originated in the adaptation of each by a different apostle to a different class of men; of Matthew to the Jew, of Mark to the Roman, and of Luke to the Greek. The fact that the first three gospels were missionary gospels, originally preached to unspiritual men with the view of bringing them to the faith in Christ and to the Christian life,

accounts for their so marked variation from John, the Christian gospel, originally preached to spiritual men already brought to faith in Christ and into membership in the true church by the gospel in its first three forms, and preached for the purpose of aiding them in making progress in the divine life. The impossibility of only one gospel, the absurdity of four gospels of precisely similar character, the insufficiency of the three missionary gospels, and the completeness of the four gospels as they are, all appear manifest from this point of view."

"The force of the great mass of alleged discrepancies, as objections to the historical character of the gospels, is utterly broken by the simple consideration — essential to the theory and based upon undoubted facts — that the productions of the evangelists are not histories, but memoirs in a modified sense; in short, not biographical sketches of Christ, but records of the apostles' practical preaching of Christ as the Saviour of men.

"Matthew's object appears in the opening line of his book, — to bring the Jew to faith in Jesus as the Messiah. Mark opens with the beginning of the gladsome message of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

"Luke writes for the special and immediate purpose of communicating systematic instruction concerning the gospel facts to Theophilus. John more distinctly declares that he has selected his materials out of a large mass and written them for a definite religious purpose.

"It follows, therefore, that it was no part of the design of the writers to secure that chronological accuracy of arrangement and of detail which is 'essential to history, but which forms no portion of the plan of a memoir.'

"They nowhere propose to give it. It would have prevented the accomplishment of their great object, since religion and not chronology, conversion of men to Christ and not the writing of history, was the chief thing. In preaching to the various classes of mankind, those facts and truths were brought forward which suited the practical end in view, and they were put in that order which seemed best fitted to secure the one great result. — the acceptance of Jesus as the Saviour. Where the order of time suited the preacher's purpose it was freely followed, and it was as freely departed from where it did not suit that purpose.

In short, chronology is of comparatively little importance in the gospel view of the life of Christ,

of so little, indeed, that from John only can be learned the extent and the successive periods of the public ministry of the Saviour. A rigid adherence to the order of time and a complete biography of Jesus would have been the worst of faults, a fatal fault, since, by eliminating their practical features, it would have unfitted the gospels for reaching the various classes of mankind. The four gospels given to man in the apostolic time are the complete gospel of God for the world in all ages."

All this really approaches the Order of Degrees, but is satisfactory only as it shows an earnest love for progressive truth.

In some instances it gives most valuable hints to aid in the investigation of the true character of each gospel; but Dr. Gregory does not give us the only key that will unlock the hidden mysteries which are arranged in a beautiful series within the letter of the Four Evangelists.

It is, however, of great significance to find such a mind taking a new departure from the general belief that the gospels are a mass of facts, without regard to order or design.

And now another proof of thought upon this subject: —

NOBLE'S PLENARY INSPIRATION.

"The question why so many as four authentic gospels should have been written has embarrassed not a few inquirers. Many, even of those who have no prejudice against them on account of any part of their contents, would be glad of a plausible pretext for ejecting some of them from the canon: thus the celebrated Michaelis, entertaining the common notions of inspiration, regarding it as a personal and permanent endowment and being at a loss for a certain rule to discriminate between compositions which are inspired and such as are not, would fain limit the inspiration of the New Testament to the apostles' writings alone; and he intimates that no small advantage would result from accepting apostleship as the criterion of inspiration, since there would then be but two gospels which we should be concerned to harmonize. But if we regard the historical Scriptures as containing throughout a spiritual meaning, and conclude that, where the same general fact is variously related, it is for the sake of teaching the same general spiritual lesson with some specific modifications, we shall have no need to wish that the number of inspired books were fewer, or to

murmur at their divine Author for the abundance of his benefits.

"The apostle and evangelist, John, concludes his gospel with observing, 'There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written, every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.' This would be an extravagant hyperbole indeed, if it referred to the acts of Jesus as they appeared in their simple performance; but it becomes a sober truth, if we understand by it all that was included and involved within the outward appearances. Only let it be acknowledged, or supposed even, that Jesus was 'the Word' or divine truth itself 'made flesh,' thus was God incarnate, and it follows inevitably that there must have been an infinity of meaning in every one both of his words and of his actions; and it may be easily conceived that one mode of narrating them would be insufficient for their full representation.

"Perhaps, also, in agreement with that unvarying constancy with which all the divine operations follow fixed laws, there may be some divine law which rendered it necessary that the gospels should neither be fewer nor more than *four;* indeed,

if inspiration be allowed to them, such must be the fact; since it were a contradiction in terms to affirm that *divine inspiration* produced the exact number of four gospels by chance. It is somewhat remarkable that we read respecting the 'river which went out of Eden to water the garden,' that 'from thence it was parted and became into four heads'; and it seems possible that the coincidence was not unintentional, which was noticed by an ancient father, that there are four evangelists, four rivers of Paradise, four corners and four rings to the ark of the covenant; not that the first of these circumstances was the cause of the others, nor even that the others were provided to form types of the first; but that they all owed their origin to the same general principle, that the same law regulating the descent of divine things into nature governed the one circumstance as the others. Now, what could the rivers of Paradise represent but the streams of truth and wisdom which nourished the mind of man in his paradisiacal state? and why were there *four* of them, but because that number expresses fulness and abundance? for it is a number which is used in reference to the four quarters of the world, — the east, west, north, and south, — in con-

nection with which it is frequently mentioned in the Scriptures; and while each of these, singly, refers to some specific quality, the four together manifestly stand for the whole. So, if the four rivers of Paradise, together, were representative of the truth and wisdom, in all their fulness and abundance, which, in the primeval ages, animated and endowed the human mind, each of them must have been the symbol of some general class of these graces. What this is, is discoverable from the import, in the language of analogy, of the four quarters from which the number four draws its significance of fulness. The east, being considered as the seat of the sun, represents much the same as the sun does, — a state of love, and of the illumination immediately proceeding from love in its highest intensity; and the west is the same general state in a lower degree; so the south is expressive of a state of intelligence, with its attendant charity, in the highest brightness; and the north of the same, verging towards obscurity. Thus the east and west, and the south and north, are to each other respectively as the internal and external of one general principle. If the cardinal points did not bear, in the language of analogy, which is that of the Word of God, some such

meaning, would they be so frequently noticed in that Word, and this even in its prophecies and visions? Now, what if four gospels were given, describing the history of the birth and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, with a reference to these four general states,—to be divine streams of truth and wisdom, possessing, respectively, these general qualities? to form the unfailing rivers of the Christian Paradise, the Church, supplying to its inhabitants the water of life? I throw out this suggestion, not as a certain truth, but because, to me, it yields a probable reason for the number of the gospels, and because it includes ideas which, as we shall see presently, tend considerably to clear up the mystery of their varying statements. To me, also, it appears quite evident that the obviously distinct characters of the gospels tally remarkably with those which this view supposes.

"Will not all who venerate these sacred narratives confess that the Gospel of John displays the highest order of the illumination here alluded to, treating more openly of the highest subjects of divine illumination, which are the true nature and character of Him whose history it relates, and the necessity of love to His name? that the Gospel of Luke, with its sweet delineations of charity and

luminous statements of so many essential truths, ranks next in clearness? and that those of Matthew and Mark, though fully imbued with the same spirit, treat their subjects in a more external manner, or clothe them with a somewhat thicker veil, and are to the former, respectively, what the north and west are to the south and east?

"Supposing there to be any truth in this view of the subject, the reader of the gospels would expect that in recording any transaction, each evangelist would relate such of the circumstances attending it as belonged to the proper character of his gospel, and would omit others; and if there are any cases in which the circumstances related by different evangelists are quite incompatible with each other, he would expect further that the narrative of the facts, as they actually appeared to the senses of the beholders, would most probably be found in one of those gospels (Matthew's or Mark's) which treat the subjects under their most external form; whilst the seemingly incongruous circumstances, *if any*, mentioned by others, equally belong to the transaction, but exhibit the inward state of mind of the parties concerned which did not manifestly appear in the words or actions actually spoken or performed, but yet were as really present as those words or actions themselves.

"But not only is there frequently this palpable difference between the thoughts and inclinations and the words and actions,—a difference of which the parties themselves are sensible,—but doubtless there is much more included within every single idea of thought than comes to the apprehension of him who conceives it; and if the moving springs from which it arises, with all their complications, were discovered to him, they would sometimes be so different from what he himself suspects, that he would hardly recognize himself in them, though they belonged to the very essence of his distinguishing character. If, then, these unconscious thoughts and inclinations were actually inscribed to him by the pen of Omniscience, to which they are all known, the picture drawn of him would still be in exact accordance with the reality, though the likeness would not be discernible to a superficial observer.

"We now, I apprehend, shall be in possession of the true principles for reconciling the seeming discrepancies of the divinely inspired recorders of the gospel history. When circumstances are omitted by one evangelist which are mentioned by another, it is because they belong to a different specific modification of the same general spiritual

lesson, and, in fact, to a different order of divine truth from those which it is within the province of that evangelist to deliver. When, *if ever*, the circumstances are such as could not, both, have outwardly occurred, one of them is the expression of the state of mind of the parties within or above their outward speech and actions; it gives such developments of inward character as would have taken place had the parties been speaking or acting in the palace of truth [referred to by Mr. Noble in a previous paragraph], and, to carry on the allegory, it belongs sometimes to the lower and sometimes to the upper stories of that edifice, or is more near to or more remote from the actual consciousness of the actors or speakers.

"A remarkable example of variations from both these causes is, I conceive, afforded by the history, as delivered by the four evangelists, of the treatment of the Lord Jesus Christ at His crucifixion, and of His behavior on the cross. Matthew and Mark, agreeably to their office of presenting things as they appeared to the outward observer, and also as they were perceived by the parties in the lowest and most external sphere of their thoughts and feelings, are very full, especially the former, in the detail of the cruel insults which were heaped upon

the Saviour in that dismal scene. They describe all the bitterness of His temptation thence arising, and the severity of His mental as well as bodily suffering. They record His despairing exclamation, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' and these, as far as can be gathered from them, were the only words uttered from the cross. Luke, on the contrary, states much less of the aggravating scoffs with which the Redeemer was assailed as He hung, and narrates nothing in His conduct which indicates that the suffering inflicted on Him engaged much of His attention. According to this gospel, when going to execution, He says to the mourning women, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children!' Instead of any exclamation of despair upon the cross, we have this effusion of imperturbable confidence: 'Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!' and these, with the encouraging declaration to one of the thieves, and a prayer for His murderers, were, as far as can be gathered from this evangelist, the only words uttered in this situation. How plain, then, is it that Luke relates the perceptions and feelings of Jesus on this occasion as they existed in a sphere of His mind above that, the sensations of which are

recorded by Matthew and Mark; with the words which He spoke from this different order of sentiments; and still more is this the case with the narrative of John. This seems to describe His feelings in a sphere of His mind to which no consciousness whatever of His indignities and sufferings reached. It therefore does not at all notice the insults addressed to Him on the cross. He is represented as occupied with no considerations whatever which regarded Himself. To represent His care of the church, which ever dwells with those of whom 'the disciple whom He loved' was a type, 'He saith to His mother,' in reference to that disciple, 'Woman, behold thy son!' and to the disciple, who thenceforth took her to his own home, 'Behold thy mother!' To express His ardent desire for man's salvation, 'and that the Scripture might be fulfilled,' He exclaimed, 'I thirst,' and so far from indicating any feeling bordering on despair, He does not even express any sense of needing support; He does not, even in appearance, refer to any Divine Helper out of Himself; but, experiencing already a perfect consciousness of His union with Divinity, and 'knowing that all things were now accomplished' necessary to effect that union, and with it to secure the

redemption of mankind, He simply, and with Divine composure, says, ' It is finished.'

"Now though these very different narratives may not, regarded only as to the letter, be irreconcilable with each other, though it is probable that all the circumstances recorded by each evangelist did actually occur, and though the very dissimilar speeches related might all actually be spoken, yet every one must see that the different narratives, and the different speeches, breathe different feelings, and belong to decidedly different classes of sentiment; which would have been broken and confused had they been jumbled into one continued discourse, but are preserved in all their distinctness and beauty, by the wise provision of providence that several gospels should be written.

"To examine, in this manner, all the passages in the gospels which appear contradictory, would constitute a work of much interest."

This has been done, and the rule has invariably been found to be a true one that the Gospels successively treat, from Matthew to John, of interior views in connection with the same subject.

And now to close with a summing up of all these testimonies to a general impression of design and order in the form of the gospels and of the cross.

The cross must be, according to all the ancient views of power from on high, whether of Thor, Jove, the four aerial giants ruling the winds, the birth of fire, or of the child Agni, a symbol of some kind of order and instruction concerning the welfare of man,—a symbol given by the one true God to meet the need of "the many and varied peoples," not yet receptive of His highest spiritual gifts. The inmost Love and Wisdom bestowed a benediction on the world, even in the forms of symbols and legends apparently concerning many gods. The childlike mind and heart of ancient worshippers were led to reverence and submission in their spiritual degree, by these teachings of the Great Universal Father, given in accommodation to their peculiar spiritual states.

But now the cross, which is to supersede all symbols, all external forms, which most truly leads the worshipping soul to the Father of all, in a better understanding of His Divine Love and His Divine Wisdom and His Divine Power, is the *cross of Christ*. In the place of the legend of the hammer of Thor, which, when cast from his hands destroyed all his enemies, and "returned back again" to the powerful god, we have the Divine Truth with power: "I came forth from the Father

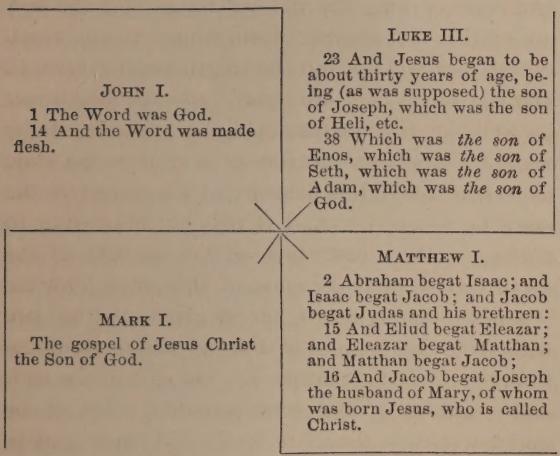
and am come into the world; again I leave the world and go to the Father." The mission of this Divine Truth is to destroy all the enemies of mankind. John says that "in the beginning was the Word and the Word was God." Then something of this Word must have been with all nations and all peoples since the world began.

Thus the cross of Christ must be in the same order and in the form of instruction the same, as in all other manifestations of the Divine purpose to teach man of Himself. Only this cross of the Four Evangelists is the fulness of the Divine teaching for the children of an advanced and receptive age. It is to be taken up and borne after the ascended Lord with all the heart, soul, mind, and strength. It teaches no fables in the characters of the old, but new and heavenly parables of spiritual love, truth, and obedience to inward laws, which will perfect the spiritual form of man. The enemies to be destroyed are no longer of the world without, but of the man's "own household" within him. The sacrifices are no longer of the altar without, but of the inner offering up of the best affections to the loving, wise, and providential Father, who asks no better "blood of lambs." The hopes and fears of life do not now depend

upon the changing appearances of sky or earth, denoting the pleased or angry attributes of fickle gods, but upon the progressive spiritual changes of the heaven and of the earth within us.

The enemies — the sacrifices — the progressive changes of spiritual life are in their fulness in the Gospels; and they are four, because the holy truths concerning the old teachings and the new are of that city coming down from heaven, which "lieth four-square, and the length and the breadth and the height of it are equal," and the measure of its wall is "the measure of a man, that is of the angel." And this measure of a man is the state as to truth, and this measure of the angel is the state as to good. And it will be interesting to notice in the illustration of the subject of the sepulchre given at the close of this work, that the "angel" distinguishes the degrees of the two wills from the degrees of the two understandings, where "man" is mentioned. Good is of the will, and truth is of the understanding. Let it be understood that there are really but three general degrees in man; as Matthew and Mark together form the natural degree (Matthew, the celestial of the natural, and Mark, the spiritual of the natural), Luke the spiritual degree, and John the celestial degree.

We will proceed to give a few proofs of the Divine Order of the Gospels from the Evangelists themselves, as it may be seen from these that no ingenuity of human thought could arrange the subjects in the spiritually accordant form thus presented, when each Evangelist is so seemingly inharmonious with the other three.


JOHN I.
1 The Word was God.
14 And the Word was made flesh.
LUKE III.
23 And Jesus began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli, etc.
38 Which was *the son* of Enos, which was *the son* of Seth, which was *the son* of Adam, which was *the son* of God.
MARK I.
The gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.
MATTHEW I.
2 Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren:
15 And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;
16 And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.

The particulars of the genealogy (which are only given in Matthew and Luke) are omitted here, as the purpose is simply to show the ascending and the descending order of the four, according

to the laws of the will and of the understanding. All Truth at this day is received from without through the word of God, through preaching and teaching, and by this we ascend to the kingdom of God, which is within us. But all Good descends from the Lord, and gives life to the truths we have received; and in harmony with this law of ascent and descent on a spiritual plane, we find that the two Gospels of Mark and Luke, which we have said refer to the understanding of the external man and to the understanding of the internal man, are of the *ascending* order, or from "Jesus Christ" to the "Son of God," while the two wills of Matthew and John are of the *descending* order, or from "Abraham" to "Jesus Christ," in Matthew, and from "the Word was God" to "the Word was made flesh," in John.

Another singular proof of this order is the change in the name of "Jacob," the father of Joseph, in Matthew, to the name of "Heli," whose son he is called in Luke. The name of Heli is only mentioned in this connection, and it signifies in the original tongue "ascending," or "climbing up."

In Matthew the genealogy is carried through Solomon, the son of David, in the descending

order (the particulars of the genealogy are not given here, but can be referred to so as to make this clear) ; but in the ascending order of Luke the son's name is changed to Nathan. As Nathan the prophet sat with David in his house when "Jehovah had given him rest round about from all his enemies," and as this prophet is not mentioned excepting in the reign of David, while no other Nathan (worthy of being named in the genealogy of our Lord) is ever alluded to in David's history as his son, it is to be concluded that Nathan the prophet was the one alluded to in the ascending order of Luke, as David's son.

This brings the quality of "Solomon" and of "Nathan" to be considered. In Matthew, Solomon the *king* takes the place next to David, in Luke, Nathan the *prophet;* and as the character of a prophet is of a spiritual quality superior to that of a king, it is well to conclude that the spiritual degree of Luke would give the name in harmony with the prophetic teachings which lead to the source of all Divine Truth, — God ; while Matthew of the lower degree, descending to the "man in the flesh," would give the name of that Truth which rules in the order of descent from the good of "Abraham."

It has been said that one of these accounts is of the lineage of Joseph, and the other of the lineage of Mary; but there is not the slightest proof of this in the words themselves. For both genealogies are of *Joseph;* Luke saying "as was supposed," but still tracing the lineage from him. Nothing but doubt hangs about the merely natural sense.

But in looking at a Divine purpose in this apparent contradiction of names, we shall be glad to acknowledge how beautifully the series of internal truths must be carried on in Matthew from Abraham to "Jesus who is called Christ," and in Luke from Jesus to the "Son of God." The ladder set on earth in Matthew, and reaching to heaven in Luke.

Matthew says that there are fourteen generations from Abraham to David, and fourteen from David until the carrying away into Babylon, and fourteen generations from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ. But these cannot be counted in this order. So we must receive with delight an explanation of this seeming discrepancy by understanding these generations to signify the fulness of the celestial, spiritual, and natural degrees of this Gospel of Matthew, which gives the compara-

tively external order of the teachings of our Lord in His life and words.

We add another example from the opening history, and then will give two others from the closing of the gospels.

JOHN.

LUKE.

26 And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,

27 To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name *was* Mary.

MARK.

MATTHEW.

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man*, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.

20 But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

The first thing to be noticed in this presentation of the subject of the annunciation is the profound silence of John and Mark upon the wonderful announcement that a Saviour is to be born into the world. There is no allusion in either of these

Gospels to the birth, or infancy, or childhood of our Lord, while Matthew gives the particulars of the annunciation in an entirely different order from that of Luke.

In Matthew it is Joseph who receives the thrilling tidings that Mary shall bring forth a son who "shall save His people from their sins." Whereas in Luke it is *Mary* who hears from the angel Gabriel that she shall bring forth a son, and "He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and of His kingdom there shall be no end." The "sins" are of the natural will, and the 'kingdom" that which is "of God within you," or of Luke's degree. In the case of Joseph, it was in sleep that "the angel of the Lord" appeared; in the case of Mary, she saw in open vision the "angel sent from God." Again the change as to degree of the name "Lord" and "God."

There is no mention of dreaming in all the Gospels excepting in Matthew; and in this, the first and second chapters relate to instruction by dreams five distinct times, also in the case of Pilate's wife at the close of this Gospel (and in no other), "I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."

This would show the comparatively obscure character of Matthew's Gospel throughout.

It might be interesting to some to say in connection with the "angel sent from God" of Luke, that never does Mark or Luke speak of the kingdom of heaven. It is with both of them always "the kingdom of God," even when Matthew speaks of the kingdom of heaven in connection with the same subject. And here again is the distinction between the will and the understanding. Every "jot and tittle" must be from the Divine, and these conspicuous differences must designate order, or what have we to rest upon? Would Mark and Luke invariably say "kingdom of God" from the character of their own minds, independent of spiritual influence? And if from spiritual influence, would there not be some object in thus being always true to a particular phrase?

To continue the subject of the birth of the Lord, which is so full of wonderful things concerning the Order of Degrees. For without this order, how could we believe that both Matthew and Luke were inspired to give the particulars of that event by which a world was to be saved, when there is not a line of harmony between the two?

LUKE.

Chapter II.

7 And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

12 And this *shall be* a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen *it*, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

18 And all they that heard *it* wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

MATTHEW.

Chapter II.

NOW when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

2 Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

3 When Herod the king had heard *these things* he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

6 And thou Bethlehem, *in* the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

7 Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.

8 And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found *him*, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.

9 When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.

10 When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.

11 And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

12 And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.

Here again the first thing to be noticed is the profound silence of both Mark and John upon the particulars of the event so fully given by Matthew and Luke. It is supposed by those who are anxious to explain the differences away that Mark and John are silent because the history of the birth has been already given by Matthew and Luke, and therefore it was unnecessary for them to enter into the details. But this is one of those efforts at explanation which has no effect upon the mind seeking for God's pure truth. For why should Matthew give the particulars of the birth if Luke has given them, or why should Luke give the particulars if Matthew has given them? Or why should *all* give the particulars of the crucifixion and resurrection if some might as well have been silent, as in the important matter of recording our Saviour's birth?

Must it not be according to degrees that Matthew, in the opening order of his plane, gives the external view of that great event? And that Luke, in the opening order of his plane, gives the internal view of the spiritual significance of that great event?

Let us look carefully at the two statements as they are presented to us in the Word of God (not of man's ingenuity of thought).

In Matthew it is said that the wise men came from the East to Jerusalem in search of the new-born Saviour, and that they were led by a star. How full of significance this simple statement! These wise men from the East do not merely refer to learned magi travelling from a distant country, searching for a young child whose star they had seen, and so come to worship him. We are all wise men from the East when we follow the star of knowledge to the new-born power of love in our external will. It is from the East, or the Lord himself in our internal will, that such wisdom as this proceeds, for it is a wisdom that will save us from our *sins* if we find the life begun which is to conquer our life of self. But this new life brings "trouble" to Herod and all Jerusalem with him. This, however, only in Matthew. In Matthew alone it is said that the wise men found the young child in "the house" with "Mary his mother." The star first led them to Jerusalem and then to the Lord, — to the church first and then to the life of the church.

But how is all this treated of in Luke?

Mary laid her first-born in a manger. But why not in a house, as in Matthew? It is explained by saying that the manger was part of the house with

many families of that time. But Luke does not give this particular, and it does not seem to satisfy our reverential regard for Luke's inspired words.

It seems better to conclude that some divine purpose instigated the inspired record.

Rev. xix, 11: "And I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True." Here in Luke also is heaven opened, and in the manger lies the infant Saviour "born this day in the city of David," which is "Christ the Lord."

In this interior degree of Luke we come to the understanding of the word signified by the "opening of heaven," and "behold a white horse." And thus the distinction of a "manger" to the "house" (or will) of Matthew's Gospel. And how is this confirmed by the "glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will to men"! All heaven is resplendent with the angelic host opening a pathway of "good tidings of great joy" from the throne above to the shepherds "abiding in the field."

In Matthew nothing of this glorious story,—only the cruel Herod, the wise men, and the single star leading to Jerusalem.

The angels of Luke do not lead to Jerusalem or

the external of the church, but to the life of it at once, — "Ye shall find the babe." The star which led to Jerusalem signifies general knowledge of the Lord, and the star which led from Jerusalem to the Lord, particular knowledges. (Bruce.)

And so we see in Luke a single angel appearing at first to the shepherds, and then "suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host," thus showing a harmony of spiritual teaching, only of different degrees. In Matthew the Lord is born in Bethlehem of Judea, while in Luke it is said in Bethlehem, the *city of David*. Another evidence of distinction between the will and the understanding, as Judea relates to good, and city of David to truth.

The following illustrations from the close of the Gospels will be of convincing proof, if studied in the love of truth : —

JOHN XIX.

19 ¶ And Pilate wrote a title, and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was, JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

20 This title then read many of the Jews; for the place where Jesus was crucified was nigh to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, *and* Greek, *and* Latin.

LUKE XXIII.

38 And a superscription also was written over him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

MARK XV.

26 And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS.

MATTHEW XXVII.

36 And sitting down they watched him there;

37 And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Here we find the two of Matthew and John giving the name of "Jesus" in connection with the inscription on the cross, and Mark and Luke omitting this. Matthew simply says, "Jesus," while John adds to this, "of Nazareth." Mark says, "the king." Luke adds to this, "this is." And is there no spiritual object in these marked differences? There must be; and according to the theory of degrees the object is explained. For we see the two will principles harmonizing again as in the opening of the Gospels, by the mention of a name belonging to the quality of *good*, which belong to the *will*, and that the two understand-

ing principles are silent on this point, and refer only to the *King* of the Jews, which is significant of the understanding of truth, Luke confirming Mark, as in "this is," while John gives the inmost evidence of the Lord's quality in adding to Matthew's statement, Jesus "of Nazareth," which is of the celestial man.

Luke in connection with John gives the three languages of the Greek, Roman, and Latin; but it is of the same order again that Luke commences with the "Greek," and John with the "Hebrew." For Greek is relatively to the Hebrew as truth to good; therefore, Luke of the understanding gives the quality of his degree first, and also John the quality of his degree first.

This is no forced interpretation of these discrepancies, as in the many efforts to harmonize the Gospels from the letter alone. The law of spiritual order alone can make these differences clear, and prove them to be of a Divine and perfect purpose.

One more example, and we shall close, although over one hundred papers have been prepared in this order of the cross, to prove the theory of spiritual degrees connected with the teachings of the Four Evangelists.

And in this illustration of the subject, which closes the life of the Lord, as to this world's view of Him (for after this none but the disciples whose spiritual eyes were opened could see the risen Saviour), let it be observed how significantly John alone speaks of "the napkin that was about his head" as "wrapped together in a place by itself." This is the very Truth of John's Gospel relatively to that of the other three. And so we find in John alone that our Saviour on the cross, "having bowed his *head*," gave up the spirit.

And we call the attention of the reader to the statement given before regarding the "angel" in Matthew and John, relatively to the "man" given in Mark and Luke, in connection with "the measure of a man, that is of the angel," of the New Jerusalem. We have said that the *angel* is of good, and the *man* is of truth in this connection.

JOHN XX.

THE first *day* of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre.

2 Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

3 Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre.

4 So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.

5 And he stooping down, *and looking in,* saw the linen clothes lying: yet went he not in.

6 Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie.

7 And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself.

8 Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw and believed.

9 For as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead.

10 Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

11 ¶ But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, *and looked* into the sepulchre,

12 And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain.

LUKE XXIV.

NOW upon the first *day* of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain *others* with them.

2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments.

MARK XVI.

AND when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the *mother* of James, and Salome, had bought sweet spices, that they might come and anoint him.

2 And very early in the morning, the first *day* of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun.

3 And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?

4 And when they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away: for it was very great.

5 And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment.

MATTHEW XXVIII.

IN the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first *day* of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

2 And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.

3 His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow.

Here again the internal of Luke and John are more defined than the external of Matthew and Mark, inasmuch as Matthew alludes to one angel and John to two, Mark alludes to one man and Luke to two. But the entirely differing statements in all the other particulars of this subject are worthy of faithful and devout study. There is no possibility of harmonizing these four entirely different versions of the same wonderful and momentous event, unless we apply to them the theory of successive development of the subject from Matthew to John.

The one angel sitting upon a stone *outside* the sepulchre, as in Matthew, is the most external of all. The next, of Mark, where the stone is already rolled away, and a young man is seen sitting within the sepulchre, clothed with a long white garment, is an exterior view of truth, although interior to Matthew in the progress on the external plane; then the appearance, in Luke, of two men in shining garments, or the illumination of the truth there from the glory of the heavenly degree; and lastly, the angel sitting at the head and the other at the feet of "where the body of Jesus had lain" of John, most significantly teaches the Infinite Truth concerning the Lord, that He is the beginning and

the end, and designates the same fulness in the risen Humanity.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, hereafter ye shall see the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

A continuation of evidence may be found in the "New Church Independent" published in Chicago, 58-5 Cottage Grove Ave. A series of papers commencing June 22, 1878

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